

REMARKS

Claims 13-19 and 24 are pending in the present application. Independent claims 13 and 24, and claims 14-19 dependent directly or indirectly on claim 13, are directed to a method of producing a polarizing plate.

In the Office Action, claims 13-19 and 24 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as obvious over US 6,746,633 to Sakamaki et al. ("Sakamaki") in view of US 2,445,555 to Binda ("Binda").

The rejection is respectfully traversed. Contrary to the interpretation set forth in the Office Action, Binda does not disclose two stretching steps in at least two crosslinking baths or in at least one crosslinking bath, with the conditions as recited in present claims 13 and 24, respectively.

Specifically, in Binda, the PVA film is stretched a first time, presumably by dry stretching (see Binda at col. 2, lines 4-7), and then treated in a crosslinking bath, possibly with a re-stretching step while in the crosslinking bath (see Binda at col. 2, lines 40-50). Thus, there is only one stretching step in the crosslinking bath, and not two as alleged in the Office Action. Since Sakamaki does not stretch twice in its crosslinking bath either (see Sakamaki col. 10, lines 39-45), no combination of Binda and Sakamaki suggests two stretching steps in one or more crosslinking baths.

In addition, contrary to the interpretation set forth in the Office Action, Binda does not suggest a second stretching step at a higher stretch ratio than the first stretching step. Specifically, Binda states that its re-stretching step is "to as nearly as possible the same degree as in the initial stretching operation" (Binda at col. 2, lines 42-43), so that the person of ordinary skill in the art would not be motivated by Binda to increase a re-stretching ratio, especially since Binda fails to suggest the significant improvement in optical properties shown in the Examples of the present

invention, as illustrated in particular by Binda's Comparative Example 2 (stretch ratios of 1.5 then 1.34) and Binda's Example 2 (1.4 then 1.6). In other words, the person of ordinary skill in the art would have found no guidance in Binda or Sakamaki on whether and how to adjust a stretch ratio differently in successive stretch ratios.

Further, Sakamaki discloses a polarization degree at 550 nm but is unconcerned about polarization degrees at 440 nm or 610 nm. Sakamaki is also completely silent as to any connection between such parameters and an objective of reducing color irregularity.

In contrast, the present inventors have discovered that setting a ratio of single transmittance to crossed transmittance at wavelengths of 440 nm, 550 nm, and 610 nm, and by crosslinking in at least two crosslinking baths containing a crosslinking agent while stretching the PVA film in respective crosslinking steps, as recited in present claim 13, or by crosslinking in at least one crosslinking bath containing a crosslinking agent while stretching the PVA film in respective crosslinking steps, as recited in present claim 24, and in particular by having a stretch ratio in a second crosslinking step that is higher than the stretch ratio in the first crosslinking step, as recited in claims 13 and 24, it is possible to reduce or avoid color irregularity, as explained and illustrated in the present specification. These features of the presently claimed invention are not taught or suggested in any of Binda or Sakamaki. Therefore, the present claims are not obvious over the cited references taken alone or in any combination.

In view of the above, it is submitted that the rejection should be withdrawn.

Finally, it is noted that claims 13 and 24 are different in scope at least because claim 13 recite "at least two crosslinking baths" whereas claim 24 recites "at least one crosslinking bath."

In conclusion, the invention as presently claimed is patentable. It is believed that the claims are in allowable condition and a notice to that effect is earnestly requested.

In the event there is, in the Examiner's opinion, any outstanding issue and such issue may be resolved by means of a telephone interview, the Examiner is respectfully requested to contact the undersigned attorney at the telephone number listed below.

In the event this paper is not considered to be timely filed, the Applicants hereby petition for an appropriate extension of the response period. Please charge the fee for such extension and any other fees which may be required to our Deposit Account No. 50-2866.

Respectfully submitted,

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